

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of the Claims

1-11. (Cancelled)

12. (Currently Amended) A method of preventing natural, artificial, or therapeutic material in an intradiscal space from extruding through a defect in the annulus fibrosis, the annulus fibrosis having an outer layer and at least one inner layer, having a cross-sectional area, comprising the steps of:

inserting a flexible device relative to a into the defect in the annulus fibrosis, the flexible device having a structure with at least two appendages made from a shape-memory material;

[[and]]

advancing the flexible device distally beyond the outer layer in the annulus fibrosis; and
~~covering the defect by:~~

~~_____ (a) _____ allowing the device to expand to a size substantially larger than the cross-sectional area of the defect,~~

~~_____ (b) _____ expanding the appendages of the flexible device by allowing the device to return to a memorized shape substantially larger than the defect in the outer layer of the annulus fibrosis, the cross-sectional area of the defect, or~~

~~_____ (c) _____ adding additional devices which physically cooperate following installation to create a shape substantially larger than the cross-sectional area of the defect.~~

wherein the flexible device prevents escape of the natural, artificial, or therapeutic material through the defect.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, wherein:
the step of inserting the device includes compacting the device into a compressed form
for introduction.

14-15. (Cancelled)

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, wherein the device
includes a liquid or gel which solidifies following the insertion of the device.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, wherein the device
includes a hydrogel or elastomer.

18. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein the device occludes the defect
while allowing compression and distraction of the disc with respect to normal spinal movement.

19-23. (Cancelled)